

“Mission groups have been a core element of the life of Seekers Church from our beginning in 1976. A decade earlier, the Church of the Saviour established mission groups as the place of primary belonging for everyone in the congregation. Today, Seekers mission groups are a primary place where we are living out God’s call on our lives, the place where we belong most deeply to this small part of the Body of Christ.”

The question raised in SLWG was whether “mission groups as the primary place of belonging” is the only place that is still true.

As Seekers has changed demographics, a number of people are unable to commit to being in a mission for a vast number of reasons. Yet, they have come together to live out their commitment to the community in other ways. Some in mission groups have found the need for other kinds of support than what they get in their mission group, and have come together in what are informally referred to as “sharing groups.” In addition to that, there are a number who are unable to commit to even a sharing group, but who remain connected through one or more individual Seekers in sustained relationships to support them in various ways. This enlarged view of how Seekers is actually working gave rise to reflection on mission groups and belonging within Seekers. Part of the reflection was on whether mission groups remain the primary place of belonging. Part of the reflection was whether some Stewards might yearn to form a new mission group but have not done so because they would deprive their current group of one Steward and cause the mission group to lose its standing. And, another component was whether a Steward may fear not finding another Steward willing to join them in a new venture and be deprived of their own sense of belonging with Seekers.

If we look at the Guide to Mission Groups on our website, the section about “Why Mission Groups” lists a number of things that are absolutely taking place in the ad hoc groups that have formed. From my own experience, what I receive from Eyes to See is different from, and equally vital to my life of following Jesus, to what I receive in Miercoles Mujeres (a sharing group), as well as my personal relationships with individual Seekers.

Personally, my take on the question, given what I’ve heard in SLWG and elsewhere, would be to ask if other kinds of committed groups might be formally recognized as legitimate places of primary belonging, equal in their standing to mission groups. The current mission groups can also continue to function in the traditionally recognized structure.

I believe understanding the ways that Seekers participants belong, as the SLWG’s recommendation that a community wide diagram of connections be compiled, will help Stewards understand the current reality of Seekers and the ways that belonging and faith encouragement and call is occurring.

“In Seekers Church, we understand that a mission group is an important place to live out God’s call. It is an expression of the Body of Christ as described in the New Testament.”

SLWG would posit that this statement limits how we can see ourselves in our current time and place, with the people who have claimed Seekers as their place of belonging. Yes, mission groups are an important place, but they are not the only place. When other places are emerging, the church has work to do to strength those structures as well.

Thinking about this shows that Seekers is committed to enlarging its view of both community and leadership structures.

Quotes are from the Seekers website *Guide to Mission Groups*